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# SPIRIT MYSTERIES EXPOSED,

BEING A

FULL AND PLAIN EXPLANATION

OF THE

WONDERFUL FEATS OF THE DAVENPORT BROTHERS

AND OTHER "MEDIUMS,"

WITH A

HISTORY OF "SPIRIT RAPPING,"

AND

EXPLANATION OF THE MEANS BY WHICH ITS MANI-  
FESTATIONS ARE PRODUCED, ETC.

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WITH ILLUSTRATIVE ENGRAVINGS.

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## P R E F A C E.

THIS little work is not designed to disparage or attack any religious belief, but simply to gratify that natural curiosity, which the public have long felt, to know the real means by which have been accomplished the mysteries of "spirit rapping," and the various feats of "mediums." Those interested in the *pecuniary* success of these manifestations have cleverly worked upon religious susceptibilities to inspire a great respect and confidence in their performances, and many feel bound to believe and defend these performers lest they bring discredit on their spiritual faith. The opponents of "spiritualism" have, on the other hand, ridiculed a faith whose greatest features they asserted to be the tipping of tables, twanging of banjos, or misspelling silly messages from the spirit land at fifty cents per head.

With "spiritualism" this book has nothing to do, unless its believers see fit to take upon their own shoulders what is here written in reference to exhibitions which we consider utterly disconnected with any agency but the operator and his confederates.

In the following pages are fully explained not simply the means by which the various feats exhibited by different 'mediums' *can* be accom

plished, but by which they *are* done. The writer can and has performed many of the feats described in this book. He knows that the Davenports and others actually do them as he describes. As to any "psychic" force, or other power in their possession, it is simply—GAS.

It may be added that the *promises* of the programmes and announcements of these seances are in many cases gross exaggerations; that glowing descriptions are given of "tests" and feats which are in reality the merest rudiments of the juggling art, and despite the frequent promise that light will be allowed, the lights are invariably put out, or turned down, at the critical moment. Committees of investigation are always kept in "proper bounds," or the "spirits" are not in favoring mood, should curiosity be too persistent.

Under the same circumstances *any* one can perform all that any "medium" can, and no medium can produce without resort to concealment and secret manipulation any phenomena however abundant may be the supply of such "spirits" as "mediums" are familiar with.

Probably the most interesting and surprising exhibitions are those of Mr. W. F. Von Vleck. Though he has obtained less notoriety he really has achieved all the feats of all prominent mediums, and under circumstances more favorable to a fair investigation on the part of his audience.

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# SPIRIT MYSTERIES EXPOSED;

EXPLAINING FULLY ALL FEATS OF

“SPIRIT RAPPERS” AND “MEDIUMS.”

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## CHAPTER I.

THE ORIGINAL “SPIRIT RAPPERS.”—THEIR METHOD OF  
GIVING COMMUNICATIONS.

THE “spirit-rapping” humbug was started in Hydesville, Wayne County, N. Y., in the year 1848, by two daughters of Mr. John D. Fox, then living in that village. At the commencement of their career as “mediums,” these girls—named Margaret and Catharine—were, respectively, twelve and nine years of age. By accident, doubtless, they discovered that by the exercise of certain parts of their anatomy, they could produce mysterious sounds—mysterious to those who heard them, simply because the means of their production were not apparent. Reports of this wonder soon went abroad, and the residence of the Fox family was visited by many people from different sections of the country—all having agreed for the marvelous, and eager to hear the mysterious raps.

It occurred to Mrs. Fox, the mother of the girls, to ask: “If you are a spirit, make two distinct raps” Two sounds were promptly made in response. A plan was then proposed, by means of which communications might be received from

"the spirits." Some mortal present would repeat the letters of the alphabet, writing down such as were designated by the "raps." Thus were sentences formed, which grew into communications more or less lengthy, as time and conditions favored; but the orthography was always decidedly bad.

What purported to be the spirit of a murdered peddler gave an account of his "taking off" by a previous tenant of the house then occupied by Mr. Fox, and beneath which, in the cellar, he said his body had been buried. Some who were inclined to credit the story made an excavation in the cellar bottom, and were rewarded by finding what a Rochester anatomist pronounced to be the bones of a sheep!

Many were led to believe that the "raps" were caused by disembodied spirits; notwithstanding the answers to questions were more frequently wrong than right; and only right when the answer could be easily guessed, or inferred from the nature of the question.

Soon after the first occurrence of the "raps," Mr. Fox moved with his family to Rochester, and the increased excitement caused by the mystery led to a public meeting, at which a committee was appointed to investigate the phenomenon. A majority of the committee reported adversely to the claims of the "mediums;" though all of them were more or less puzzled.

In Buffalo, where the "Fox Girls" subsequently let their spirits flow, a committee of physicians re-



ported that the "raps" were produced by a snapping of the tendons of certain muscles at both the knee and ankle joints. That theory, though very much ridiculed by the spiritualists then and since, was correct, as further developments proved.

Mrs. Culver, a relation of one of the Fox girls, made a solemn deposition before a magistrate, to the effect that one of the girls had instructed her how to produce the "raps" on condition that she (Mrs. C.) should not communicate a knowledge of the matter to any one. Mrs. Culver was a good Christian woman, and she felt it her duty—as the deception had been carried so far—to expose the matter. She actually produced the "raps" in presence of the magistrate, and explained the manner of making them.

Mrs. Brown, an elder sister of the girls who originated the rapping humbug, learned the business of them while they were in Rochester, of which place she was also then a resident, and afterward acquired considerable distinction as a "medium."

It was found that making mysterious noises as a business would pay, so it was continued by the girls, who, with their mother, soon settled in New York city.

Mr. J. D. Fox, the father of the rappers, never countenanced his daughters in their career of humbuggery. When they inaugurated the "new dispensation," he was a member of the Methodist church, and, living apart from his family, he remained so until his death, which occurred a few years since.

Some time after becoming a resident of the city of New York, and when spiritualism had got well under way, Margaret Fox joined the Roman Catholic church. She made the acquaintance of the late lamented Elisha Kent Kane, who took her to Philadelphia, for the purpose of having her educated, and with whom, very much in opposition to the wishes of his family, she entered into a betrothal of marriage. Dr. Kane died before there could be a public celebration of the marriage; though Margaret Fox now claims to have been privately married to him, and has published a book, composed principally of their correspondence with each other, in support of the claim.

While under the protection and patronage of Dr. Kane, and for some time after his death, Margaret did not engage as a professional "medium," but lately she has returned to New York and resumed the "spirit-rapping" business. The writer, accompanied by two friends, recently visited her. Having expressed to her our desire for some communication from the other world, and paying the required fee therefor in advance, we were requested to take seats at a table which was standing in the room. On our complying, the "medium" also took a seat at a vacant side of the table.

Fixing upon one of our number to be the proper person to receive the first communication, he was desired by the "medium" to write the names of several of his spirit-friends on some blank paper which was lying on the table. He did so, including in the list, as he afterward told us, the name

of one person still in the flesh ; and by some mischance the raps indicated that name as belonging to a spirit who would communicate. The list of names was lying in view of the "medium," and it would have been easy for her to read them. The gentleman inquired where that particular spirit died. He was told to write down names of a number of places, including the one where the person died, and then to point at them, one after another, and the raps would indicate the right one. It being impossible for him to do so, as the person was still living, he quietly remarked that he would forego the pleasure of any further communication that might be afforded him by that spirit, and give way to another inquirer.

With due solemnity, the writer of this report asked if some one of his spirit friends would favor him with a communication. He was requested by the "medium" to write down the names of spirits from whom he desired to hear. He suggested that if she should point at letters of the alphabet, a communication would be spelled out, without his writing any names. Thereupon she went over the alphabet a sufficient number of times for the rap to spell *Elizabeth*, and asked if he had any friend of that name in the spirit world. In reply, he said he could not call to mind such a person ; but that if the full name should be given, he might remember it. Elizabeth, however, failed to give any information as to what further she was called on earth, and the investigation concluded that her memory was defective. To assist the medium, the writer

remarked that both his parents were dead, and that it would delight him to be able to get intelligence from one or both of them. Then followed a short communication, (spelled out by raps, the medium pointing at letters of the alphabet) purporting to be given by his mother, but to which no name was attached. Handing him the printed alphabet, the "medium" requested him to point at the letters, in order that his mother might spell her name. He complied; but in pointing, was careful not to hesitate at any particular letters—and not one was indicated. He thus went over the alphabet several times, and with no result. He then tried again, very slightly hesitating at certain letters, thus leading the raps to spell out *Alice Vaughn* as being the name of his mother, though the one really borne by her in earth-life was very different from that! Nevertheless he expressed much astonishment, and the medium smiled jubilantly, remarking that it was a "good test," as spirits did not usually spell their names in full. "But why should they not," was asked, "if they can communicate at all?" "I don't know," she replied, "but certainly they don't often do it; and I have been told that they don't have surnames in the other world!"

The other gentleman of the party then solicited something from his spirit friends; and he soon received a communication purporting to be made by his father; but his deceased parent, if really present, was unable to tell when, where, or how he died. At length the inquirer asked the spirit, of his father, to give his (the questioner's) first name

The author of this faithful account knew the first name of the gentleman to be *John*, and being permitted to point at letters of the alphabet he misled the "spirit" into spelling *Henry*, simply by hesitating slightly on the letters forming that name.

The raps were loud, and made on the floor when not on the legs of the table. The "medium" was asked if she could have the raps on the table when she was sitting away from it. Her reply was that she sometimes could. But certainly she did not on that occasion.

While the "medium" was standing with her dress pressed against the door, her hand on the knob as if to steady herself, we could hear raps on the lower part of the door, and which might have been easily made with her foot. When asked if the sounds could be made on the door when her dress was not in contact with it, she replied that such had often been the case. But it was not the case while we were there!

The "medium" could communicate no name or fact, unknown to her, without gleaning it from the inquirer. Her raps could be made by a contrivance easily concealed beneath her dress; it not being difficult to make them on the legs of the table under cover of her dress, which came in contact with them.

Here are directions for making just such raps as are usually heard at the seances of Margaret and Catharine Fox, it being understood that the operator is to be a woman. Fasten one end of a piece

of elastic band, four or five inches long, to the middle of a pound bar of lead, and the other end to a ring large enough to receive the toe of your shoe. Take another piece of elastic band, eight inches or more in length, fasten one end to the ring, and the other end to the right leg above the knee. When standing, with the contrivance arranged as described, the bar of lead should not come quite to the ankle. Of course a long dress is necessary to conceal it. When sitting, the raps can be made by putting the toe of the left foot through the ring, and with a slight movement, causing the lead to strike the floor. One end of the bar will be likely to come in contact with the floor a little before the other end does, and thus produce the peculiar double knock made by the Fox "mediums." By a slight lateral motion of the foot, raps can be made with such a contrivance on a table-leg or a door.

The writer heard a gentleman say that, while he was accompanying Catharine Fox to her home one evening, after a "rapping" seance, he distinguished a sound in connection with her step that reminded him of the noise made by a wooden peg (in place of a leg) in walking. He asked her if she knew what caused it; and, with apparently some embarrassment, she replied that she could not conceive. It occurred to him that perhaps her rapping arrangement was not fully under her control at the time. It may be conceived how a weight, attached to an elastic band would, in the movement of walking, thump on the pavement like a wooden leg.

Those visiting the Fox mediums have often remarked that the latter, before sitting down to get "the raps," have had occasion to leave the room for a short time.

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## CHAPTER II.

### HOW A SPIRIT MEDIUM WAS CAUGHT "PUTTING HER FOOT IN IT."

THE following account of a seance held by Catharine Fox is from an intelligent lady who was present :

Something more being desired than hum-drum rapping and common-place communications, other "demonstrations" were attempted. Three full-leaf tables being placed together leaf to leaf, with the leaves raised, Katy sat with her feet under the point where two leaves came in contact. Opposite her sat an investigator, all the other people in the room being also seated at the tables. The gentleman opposite Katy was told to put a handkerchief over his hand, and with the latter hold a tambourine under the leaves, it being suggested that "the spirits" would take the tambourine from his hand and jingle it. He did as requested ; in fact his zeal led him to do more ; for, after the tambourine had been taken from his hand, and was being "jingled," he suddenly let down one of the table-leaves, and Katy was seen to have a foot, without a shoe, in contact with, and doing its best to rattle, the instrument. The foot quickly disappeared, however, beneath the "medium's" dress.



The gentleman stated to the others present what he had discovered. Catharine denied having had her foot in contact with the tambourine.

"Please to let me see your foot," said the gentleman.

She thrust out a foot with a shoe on.

"Be so good as to show your other foot," was the further request.

But Katy did not comply. With an appearance of virtuous indignation she flounced out of the room, conditions being unfavorable for any more "demonstrations" that evening.

The writer of these explanations can make loud sounds, similar to what some would call spirit raps, and without any mechanical contrivance or apparent muscular effort; even changing the seeming location of them. One manner of producing these sounds is to snap the tendon of the *posterior tibia* muscle over one of the ankle bones. But few people can do it. A sound thus produced can be toned or modulated so as to seem near or distant, providing that the operator is not in very close proximity to the auditor. Were a thick cushion placed on the top of a table, and the operator should stand on that, the snapping of the tendon would cause a distinct concussion in the table. Were he to have his foot on the floor, close by the leg of the table, when making the sound, the concussion would be communicated to the table leg, and conducted to every part of that piece of furniture.

It is not easy to determine the precise location



of a sound, the cause of which is not apparent. The impressions made upon the sense of seeing often correct those made upon the sense of hearing, and *vice versa*. Were a dozen men ranged in a row, faces to the wall, on one side of a room, and an individual of the number should utter a sound, it would not be easy for a person on the opposite side of the room to identify the man who made the sound if there were no apparent motion accompanying it. No doubt the reader will be able to refer to some incident in his own experience which will serve as an illustration of the difficulty in locating sounds.

Another method of producing what some credulous people might be made to believe were "spirit raps," is to press the *os pisciform*, a bone located at the outer angle of the upper portion of the palm, adjoining the wrist, against the sharp edge of a table, and slightly contracting the contiguous muscles, the "rap" being made by a sudden displacement of the bone, it being forced out of its position by the muscular contraction while it is pressed against the edge of the table, causing a snapping of the tendinous attachments. Those who are accomplished in that method of "rapping," can do it with hardly a perceptible motion, and without experiencing any pain or injury as a result.

"Raps" can also be produced by a slight laxation of the bones at the wrist joint, while the ball of the thumb and upper joints of the fingers are firmly pressed against the table. By relaxing the muscles after the laxation, the bones of the wrist

return to their proper place, the laxation having to be repeated for each rap. It is accomplished with but little motion.

Some "mediums" make "raps" by rolling the muscles of the arm over the edge of a table. There are, in fact, a great many ways in which mysterious noises may be made—mysterious to those not in the secret.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### THE DAVENPORT BROTHERS, AND THE TRUE CHARACTER AND MEANS OF ACCOMPLISHING THEIR MYSTERIES.

TWO young men, known as the Davenport brothers, have obtained a very extensive notoriety as "physical mediums." They are natives of Buffalo, N. Y., where, when they were mere boys, their "wonderful powers" were originally developed and manifested. Their first performances in this city were given under the management of their father at Union Hall, 195 Bowery, in the year 1855, most of which the writer attended. The audience being properly seated, the entrance door was locked and the hall darkened, when various manifestations—fully described and explained in another place—were produced.

At the request of the "controlling spirit," made through a horn, the hall was lighted at intervals during the entertainment, at which times the mediums looked particularly innocent and demure, as if they had never once thought of cheating anybody.

On one of these occasions, however, a gentleman suddenly lighted the hall by means of a dark-lantern, without having been specially called upon to do so; and the boys were distinctly seen to be doing what they had claimed to be done by "the spirits." The audience, with the exception of a few spiritualists, left in disgust. The latter were favored with further demonstrations and an explanation through the horn, quite satisfactory to most of them, of what the rash skeptics, with too much faith in their sense of sight, had hastily concluded to be an exposure of the mediums as impostors.

To give more positive evidence of their claims to "mediumship" being well founded, the boys ventured upon an extra "manifestation" shortly after the occurrence above described. At a private seance about a dozen gentlemen, several of whom were members of the press, were seated, together with the mediums, at one side of a long high table, the mediums being midway of the row. This time a little, dim, ghostly gaslight was allowed in the room.

What appeared to be a hand was exhibited partly above the edge of the vacant side of the table, and opposite the mediums. Several of these present had a feeling, as they afterward expressed it, of chills creeping over them. The fingers of the "spirit hand" seemed to move; and one spiritualist present, with a vivid imagination, admired the "beautiful proportions," his observation extending even to the finger nails.

The humbug would have been a success, probably, if John F. Coles, one of the party had not suddenly turned on a full head of gas, and pounced on Ira Davenport, from whose foot he took a nicely stuffed glove! The glove had been drawn partly over the toe of Ira's boot, and by a movement of the foot the fingers were made to move.

The Davenports suddenly left for home, disgraced even in the estimation of the most confiding spiritualists.

With some change in their mode of operating, and having become more expert by practice, they were quite successful at their subsequent exhibitions in New York.

Their "manifestations" are produced in either a cabinet or a darkened room, and in no instance while the operators are in full view of the audience.

In a darkened room their "manifestations" mostly consist of the thrumming (without music) of guitars, ringing of bells, rattling of tambourines, &c., while at the same time the instruments are moved—as indicated by the sounds from them—with considerable rapidity about the room. The same sounds and movements also occur to a limited extent after the operators have been bound by a committee from the audience, the reintroduction of light disclosing them still in bonds as placed by the committee. They usually extricate themselves from the tying after the light is again extinguished, in less time than the committee occupied in binding them. During their entertainment they are also bound with ropes by what they

assume to be a spirit power, without mortal assistance. To all appearance the tying done by "the spirits" is as methodical and secure as any that a mortal could do. Yet the very instant that darkness supervenes, after the knots have been examined by the committee, the musical instruments are sounded, and various "manifestations" made that could not possibly be accomplished without the use of hands; immediately on the cessation of which light is produced, and the "mediums" are ascertained to be bound as they were before the extinction of the light. Sometimes, while he is thus situated, one of the mediums will have his coat removed from his body in a few seconds' time.

A performance of the Davenport's, which many spiritualists have asserted to be an indubitable evidence of the exercise of spirit power, is as follows: One of them sits with his right side to the table on which the instruments are lying. The other takes a seat beside, and at the left of the one at the table. An investigator sits in front of the mediums, and puts a hand on the head of each; and, reaching up, each medium puts his hands, in separate places, but close together, on an arm of the investigator. The light is extinguished, and sounds are made on the instruments, the latter being moved, and perhaps brought in contact with the investigator's head. That gentleman is not conscious of any change in the position of the mediums. Their hands seem to him to remain constantly clasped to his arms, in which

position they are found to be when the light is again produced.

The mysterious cabinet in which the Davenports give their public exhibitions is about six feet high, six feet wide, and two and a half feet deep, the front consisting of three doors opening outward. In each end is a seat with holes through which the ropes can be passed in securing the performers. In the upper part of the middle door is a lozenge-shaped aperture, curtained on the inside with black muslin or oil-cloth. The bolts are on the inside of the door. [*See frontispiece.*]

As preliminary to the "manifestations," and in order that it may not be supposed that they are the operators, the mediums submit to being bound by a committee from the audience. The doors are then closed and bolted, it being necessary for the mortal manager to reach through the aperture to secure the middle door. A tremendous racket is soon made in the cabinet, the noise of the musical instruments being combined with a general whang banging; and sometimes people in the audience think they can distinguish the sound of a cloven hoof kicking things around inside the structure which encloses the mediums.

Usually, after the first performance, the doors of the cabinet are opened, and the committees requested to observe that the operators are still bound; but sometimes there is an interval just before the opening of the door, in which a rattling of the ropes is heard, and then the mediums walk forth, free. If they are observed by the

committee before the ropes are removed from them, the doors are again closed till the untying is accomplished.

Being again enclosed in the cabinet, the young men are bound by what they assert to be a spirit power, during the exercise of which they are passive. The "spirit tying" is submitted for examination to the committee, by whom it is pronounced to be apparently so secure as to preclude the possibility of the mediums being able to use their hands. No sooner are the doors closed, however, than hands are seen at the aperture in the middle door. These hands are visible for but an instant at a time, and with a rapid vibratory movement while in view, so that it would not be possibly for the observer to identify them as belonging to the mediums, however positively he might believe them to be theirs.

Immediately on the disappearance of the hands from the aperture, the cabinet doors are opened, and the committee, after an examination, report the mediums to be still bound. The doors are again closed, and instantly "the spirits" strike up a lively tune on a violin, with a bell and tambourine accompaniment.

That the audience may be still more profoundly impressed with the wonderful powers of the young men, they sometimes request that flour be placed in their hands, as a security, in addition to the "spirit tying," against their being able to use those members. Their request being complied with, a hand or two is shown at the aperture, some noises



are made on the musical instruments, and then the mediums exhibit the flour still in their hands, with none spilled on their clothing or the floor.

Sometimes they permit one of the committee to sit in the cabinet with them, for a short time, while they are bound, but he, too, must be bound, with his right hand secured to one medium's shoulder, and his left hand to the other medium's knees. The lights in the hall are then turned down so that it is quite dark in the cabinet. The gentleman in contact with the mediums is banged over the head with an instrument of music, his hair is pulled, his nose tweaked, and all together he is "pretty considerably mussed up." Being released from the not very pleasant position, and perhaps looking somewhat scared, he reports to the audience what has been done to him, with the additional statement that he did not detect any movement on the part of the mediums. "If not the manifestation of spirit power, what is it?" is a question which very naturally arises in the minds of those present. An answer is contained in the following explanations:

In a darkened room, the investigators being seated by the walls, the mediums grasp the guitars by the neck, next the keys, and swing them around, and thrust them into different parts of the open space of the room, at the same time vibrating the strings of the instruments with the fore-finger. The faster the finger passes over the strings, the more rapidly the instruments seem to move. Two hands can thus use as many guitars, and a tea-bell,



clasped by the little finger of either hand, can be rung at the same time. Or one performer can sound a guitar and bell with one hand, and play an accordion or concertina with the other, an end of the last named instrument being held under the arm against the body. In the darkness the auditors think the instruments go further than they really do; and the room being close, the sounds are echoed or reflected from the walls.

When an investigator is sitting with the mediums at a table whereon musical instruments are lying, his hands resting on their heads, and their hands clasped to his arms above the elbow, the medium next the table removes one hand from the arm without being detected, simply because the presence of the other hand, which is nearer the shoulder, is so great as to cut off communication by means of the nerves of sensation from the arms below. It is thus impossible for the investigator to determine whether both hands of the medium are on his arm or not. He thinks they are, because the sensation in his arm remains the same. In the first place, the left hand of the medium is put heavily on the arm next the shoulder, and the right hand quite lightly, close by the other next the elbow. Both hands are seen to be on the arm, and are presumed to be pressing with equal force. The light is extinguished, and perhaps the medium takes the man's attention momentarily from his arm, by suggesting that their feet be placed in contact; then it is that, with a gradually increased pressure of his left hand, the medium carefully removes his right

hand, and while he preserves a rigidity of the muscles of his neck and back, so as not to move his head, he takes the guitar (which lies within reach) by the neck, and extending the body of the instrument as far as possible, moves it in a half-circle, vibrating the strings with his fore-finger. That the demonstration may be more striking, perhaps he hits the guitar against the head of the man with whom he is in contact. If he wishes to ring a bell at the same time, he can hold it with his little finger. He can sound, in turn, all the instruments lying on the table; then, carefully replacing his hand on the man's arm, he is ready to have a light produced. The other medium really holds on with both hands to the arm he has clasped, feeling sure that while he does so it cannot be interfering with the operations of "the spirits" at the table.

Should the medium put his right hand on top of the extended thumb of his left hand, with an appearance, to the investigator, of both hands being on his arm, the same results could be produced with less risk of detection; for the presence of the thumb, where the right hand was seen to be, would lead the investigator to suppose, in the darkness, that the hand was still there.

If in their dark seance, phosphorus having been put on the instruments, you should see a phosphorescent light very far above the stage, you may take it that the instrument which is *heard* is *not* where the light is seen, but that the phosphorus has been rubbed from the instruments, and some other put on a piece of card-board, which is attached to a

folding rod and elevated in the darkness, to the desired position.

To the Davenports, the extrication of themselves, after being bound by a committee, is a brief and easy task. A simple "twist of the wrist" will convert a "square knot," usually considered the most secure, into two "half-hitches," through which the part of the rope they enclose can be easily slipped. With a little slack in the rope any ordinary knot can be made into a "slip-knot." It is hardly possible to bind a man without causing him pain, so that he cannot get a "slack" in the rope. The writer has been bound with ropes a great many times by people who were determined to make a "good job" of the tying, and not once has he failed to release himself, often in less time than was occupied in binding him.

After the Davenports have been bound in their cabinets by a committee, and the doors of the structure are closed, they immediately set to work to loosen the knots next their wrists and extricate their hands, which they usually succeed in doing in a short space of time. In some instances one of them will have a hand at liberty as soon as the middle door is bolted, which he exhibits at the aperture, to be followed shortly by other hands; then both the mediums do their "level best" in making a noise with such instruments as they have at hand. Speedily getting their hands back in the ropes and drawing the knots close to their wrists, they make some additional noise with one or two instruments which they had so placed as to be still

within their reach, and then give a signal for the opening of the doors. The knots are examined by the committee and reported to be "the same as they were;" the doors are again closed and the operatives release themselves entirely from the ropes, untying every knot.

Sometimes, after being tied by a committee, the mediums cannot readily extricate their hands and get them back as they were, in which case they do not have the doors open till all the knots are untied, it being a better policy for them to wait till "the spirits" have tied them before making a show of hands or torturing the musical instruments.

The important point with the Davenports, in tying themselves, is to have a knot next their wrists that looks solid, "fair and square," but which at the same time will admit of being slipped, so that they can get their hands out in a moment. There are several ways in which such a knot can be formed, one of which is as follows: A square knot is loosely tied in the middle of a rope, then the ends of the rope are tucked through, in opposite directions, below the knot, and the latter is then drawn tight. There are then two loops, which are left just large enough for the passage of a hand through them. The ends of the rope are then put through the holes in the seat, and tied beneath, and also to the feet. Lastly the hands are put through the loops, and the knot drawn close to the wrist, coming between the latter. No novice in tying would suspect from the appearance of such a knot,

and without taking particular pains in tracing the direction of the rope in forming it, that it could be slipped. As the hands of the mediums when thus tied are at their backs, close to the end of the cabi-



net, the committee cannot have a very good opportunity to observe the most important knot.

The doors next the ends of the cabinet are first closed by the manager, and as the mediums are then concealed from view of the audience, they strain open the loops and are ready to use their hands as soon as the middle door is closed, which one of them instantly bolts on the inside. Then their hands are thrust under the curtain, which hangs over the aperture in the door, and exhibited to the audience; but, as before stated, the hands are exhibited but for an instant at a time, and with a vibratory motion of them; otherwise they might

be recognized as belonging to the mediums. To make the hands look large or small, they spread or press together the fingers. With that peculiar motion imparted to them, four hands at the aperture will appear to be half a dozen, or more, as two pennies, rubbed together between the balls of a person's thumbs, will present what appear to be the edges of three.

A lady's flesh-colored kid glove, nicely stuffed with cotton, has sometimes been exhibited as the hand of a female spirit—a critical observation of it not being allowed.

These mediums once exhibited what they doubtless supposed would look like the hand of a negro; but it was of uniform blackness, palm and all. At one of their entertainments, when, in addition to the exhibition of "spirit hands," a naked arm was protruded from the aperture, an old lady, who, on account of the dimness of her vision, was permitted to stand close by the cabinet, saw, notwithstanding her defective sight, what made her exclaim, "Well, I declare! They must practice vaccination in the other world, for I see marks of it on that spirit arm!" When the "spirit arm" was shown at another time, rope-marks were seen on the wrist!

It takes these mediums but a few seconds to get their hands back into the loops, and draw the knots close to their wrists, ready to be examined by the committee.

In making the music, one medium holds the violin in the manner usual with most players of that

instrument, and with the little finger of the bow hand he clasps a bell, which rings in time with the music. The other medium beats the tambourine on his head or knees with one hand, while his other hand is engaged in making a noise on something else.

It is desirable that they should be making a noise in the cabinet up to the very moment of opening the doors; but it would not be safe for them to have all the instruments going till then. So one of the mediums puts his hand back through the loops and draws the knots close; the other puts his left hand through one of the loops, slips the knot down to the wrist, and with the fingers of that hand he holds the other loop open ready to receive the right hand without any waste of time. Then with the right hand he shoves back the bolt of the middle door, which remains closed till pressed against, seizes the violin by the neck, vibrates the strings loudly with his forefinger, and pressing the instrument against the door, gives it a shove to the outside. Before any one without the cabinet can get a glimpse of the hand or say "Yankee Doodle," it is back into the loop held open to receive it and the knot drawn close. It matters not whether it be the violin or some other instrument used in the manifestation last described, the object of the medium being to have the show go on up to the latest moment before he is examined by the committee, so that no one would suspect he had been making use of his hands. Should there be much of an interval between the cessation of the "mani-



festations" and the opening of the doors, some would naturally suppose that the time was occupied by the mediums in "fixing" themselves. There being such a brief interval between the closing of the doors and the beginning of the "manifestations," and between the cessation of the latter and the opening of the doors, it does not seem to the committee possible that the mediums could get their hands out of and into the ropes so soon, if at all.

Sometimes when a committee man is going out of the cabinet after making an examination, one of the mediums will strike him violently on the shoulder or some other part of his person, and before he can look around, the medium's hand is behind him (the medium) into the loop, and the knot is drawn down to the wrist some little time before the committee-man has recovered from his astonishment sufficiently to make a further examination of the tying.

If flour has been placed in the hands of the mediums, it makes no difference as to their being able to get those members out of or into the loops; but to show hands at the aperture, or to make a noise on the instruments, it is necessary that they should get the flour out of one hand into the other. The moisture of the hand and squeezing packs the flour into a lump, which can be laid into the other hand and returned without losing any. The little that adheres to the empty hand can be wiped off in the pantaloons pocket. They seldom if ever take flour into their hands while in the bonds put upon them by the committee. The principal part of their



show is after the tying has been done in their own way.

It would not be safe for the Davenports to allow one of the committee to be in the cabinet with them while the "manifestations" were being made without having been bound; for in such a case he might take a notion to "make a grab," with a liability to seize hold of their hands, and thus detect the imposture; but having his hands bound—the right to the shoulder of one medium, the left to the knees of the other medium—he is placed at a disadvantage, and the medium to whose knees one of the committeeman's hands is fastened, can, without any movement of his knees to betray him, do all that has been described in another part of this article as being done under such circumstances.

The reader will be able to understand how easy it is for one of the mediums to have his coat taken off after he has tied his own hands together. He can throw the coat in the air and get his hand back into the ropes without their movement being seen, even though a light should be produced soon enough to enable the audience to get a glimpse of the coat before it has quite reached the floor.

If, after the spirits have bound the Davenports, and hands have been shown at the aperture in the door of their cabinet, the committee should untie the ropes, the secret of the knots would be discovered. But they would not consent to having the ropes untied by the committee. Were they really passive, as they claim to be, while the "manifes-

tations " are going on, they could not reasonably object to having the door of the cabinet opened at any time ; but their manager does not permit of the opening of the door unless it is requested by the mediums.

The performances of these young men are interesting on account of the ingenuity and expertness exercised by them, and would not be in the least objectionable were it not for their pretended " mediumship."

The Davenports lately gave some of their exhibitions at Ithaca, N. Y., but their tricks were sadly disarranged by some of the Cornell University fellows. A private letter tells us that some of the students, having a scientific turn of mind, provided themselves beforehand with pyrotechnic balls containing phosphorus, so made as to ignite suddenly with a bright light. During the dark seances, when the Davenports purported to be, and as the audience supposed were, bound hand and foot within their closet or cabinet, and when the guitar was floating in the air and playing musically around, the aforesaid students struck their lights all of a sudden, when the " spirits " were found to be no others than the Davenports themselves, who were dodging about the stage, brandishing the guitars, and playing the tunes. The music suddenly ceased, the committee declared the performance a humbug, and the players departed from Ithaca by the earliest train.



## CHAPTER IV.

PERFORMANCES OF OTHER "MEDIUMS"—HOUGH AND MRS. STODDARD—SPIRIT VOICES "IN A HORN"—MORE "SPIRIT" MYSTERIES.

IN the preceding chapter we gave a full explanation of the secrets by which the Davenport Brothers produced their startling manifestations and illusions. We now present a further exposure of the spirit mysteries as performed by other exhibitors. Though differing in their respective details they are similar in many respects.

A youth said to be seventeen years of age, named De Witt C. Hough, has given, under the



management of Mrs. Stoddard, his mother, quite a number of "spiritual seances" in this city during the past year. Mrs. Stoddard is a smart woman, and her shrewd management makes the shallow performances of her docile, half simple "mediumistic" son the means of accumulating many "stamps."



In a darkened room Master De Witt binds himself in a bungling way, but well enough to somewhat puzzle a novice; and after an examination in the light, by a committee, he slips his hands out of the ropes, takes off his coat, and gets into the ropes again. As the method observed in these operations is not apparent to those present, on account of the darkness, Mrs. S. insists that it is

altogether a spiritual performance. She contends that while her son's hands continue to be bound together the spirits remove the coat from his back by disorganizing it. But the "controlling intelli-



gence" has never been able to give a good reason why the coat cannot be exhibited to the audience in a state of disorganization, and then be reconstructed again.

The youth's coat is also taken off his back, in the dark, after Mrs. Stoddard has sewed it together in front, and fastened one cuff to the other. There is nothing to prevent the boy pulling his arms out of the sleeves, and raising the coat up over his head; and yet the taking off his coat under such

circumstances is asserted to be a wonderful exercise of spirit power.

A strip of cotton cloth is put between the fingers of one of the boy's hands, tied around his wrist, and the ends sewed to his sleeves. An iron ring, said to be too small to go over his hand, is then put on his wrist, so as to be above where the strip of cloth is tied around. It would not be very difficult for him to double up his hand and pull over the knuckles the cloths from between the fingers, slip the ring over his hand, put the cloth back between the fingers, and force the ring under the somewhat elastic ligature on the wrist. A gentleman whose hand does not appear to be smaller than Master De Witt's slipped it, without pain or abrasion of the skin, through the ring used by that "medium." So, too, of the wire armor.

In addition to other "manifestations," there is talking through a horn, in a voice that sounds like Master De Witt's, notwithstanding his efforts to disguise it; and the language is like his, including bad grammar and other peculiarities. Yet Mrs. Stoddard says it is the voice of a spirit. Very likely it is—"in a horn."

A gentleman present at one of these seances requested permission of Mrs. S. to blacken the mouthpiece of the horn, whereat she seemed to be as much provoked as if he had attempted to blacken her mouth or her character. Several others present insisted upon the reasonableness of the desired test, as it would enable them to know whether the boy or a spirit spoke through the horn. Mrs. S.

proposed to allow the test for ten dollars, and her proposition was accepted ; but on consulting "the spirits" they forbade the application of such a test. Mrs. S. then expressed a desire that the spirits should be allowed to proceed in their own way, without impertinent suggestions or interference by the investigators. To partially appease the evident dissatisfaction of her audience, however, she promised that at a private seance on a future evening she would, for a certain pecuniary consideration, permit the application of lampblack to the mouthpiece of the horn, with other tests which she thought would be conclusive.

To prevent encroachment on the medium and interference with the "manifestations," Mrs. S. passes a rope in front of the audience, and holds on to one end—the other end being fastened—while the light is out.

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## CHAPTER V.

### HOW SPIRITS RATTLED THE WINDOW.

ONE "dark-circle medium," wishing to add something to his usual programme, secretly oiled the hinges of the door between the "circle-room" and entry. The latter, as well as the "circle-room," was made dark before his performance began. After producing the more common "manifestations," he requested the spirits to rattle all the windows in the room. Stepping to the door, he waved (swung) it with a quick motion, and of course the disturbance of the air made the windows, which



were loosely fitted in the casings, rattle loudly. The hinges of the door, being oiled, did not creak. The spiritualists present considered it a most interesting and conclusive demonstration; for certainly the medium could not be at *all* the windows at the same moment, even if he were at one.

The same ingenious "medium" would lay a guitar upon a table at some little distance from the investigators; then, going to another part of the room, and sometimes even into an adjoining room, with the communicating door slightly ajar, he caused sounds to proceed from the instrument, as if one of its strings were being touched by a finger. In that way questions were answered, and communications spelled out, as by the rapping mediums.

To produce the sounds, the operator had previously taken out the peg from the end of the guitar, and attached to it one end of a long silken thread. The other end was passed through the hole where the peg belonged, and secured to one of the base strings close by the edge of the aperture in the top of the instrument. The thread was then drawn inside the guitar and the peg inserted. A person would not, by a superficial observation of the instrument, perceive the thread. When ready to operate, the performer dexterously withdrew the peg as he laid the guitar on the table, and taking it with him, thus had connection, by means of the thread, with the guitar strings. Holding the thread with one hand, and keeping it a little slack, he "snapped" it with a finger of the other hand, and



that caused the guitar string to vibrate. In the dim light those present could not perceive the thread. When through with the "manifestations," the operator laid hold of the guitar in such a way that, without being detected, he could insert the peg and break off the thread, when he was quite willing to have the instrument carefully examined.

This same "medium" also caused the notes of a bugle to sound while he held it under the table with one hand. To accomplish this, he had attached a tube to a hollow rubber ball. The tube fitted closely in the mouth of the bugle. With his fingers on the keys of the bugle, he pressed the ball against the table, and thus forced sufficient air into the instrument to sound the notes. A little "prestidigitation" enabled him to keep the rubber ball out of sight and to use it without exciting suspicion.

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## CHAPTER VI.

HOW A SPIRITUALIST WAS SOLD—A CLEVER TRICK AND A WONDERFUL "MANIFESTATION."

A YOUNG man, engaged in giving public exhibitions, with illustrative experiments, of the deceptive practices of professional spiritual mediums, was frequently told by spiritualists that his experiments were but "bungling imitations of the genuine phenomena." He therefore pursued, for a time, the plan of giving, *incognito*, in the places he visited, a series of private entertainments, to which spiritualists were invited, and at which he

did not commit himself by saying he was or was not a medium, but let his exhibition speak for itself. His "manifestations" were invariably received by the spiritualists as genuine; and, till he came out with his exposition, which shortly followed, he was regarded as an "A No. 1" medium.

At one of his private seances, while pursuing the plan mentioned, after going through with a variety of demonstrations, he conceived a new test. Requesting one of the spiritualists present to take a seat with his back to the table, on which several musical instruments were lying, he complied; and the performer placed his right hand on the man's head, and with his other hand he held both hands of the man against the breast of the latter. The room was then made dark. The purpose of the performer was to get one of his cheeks, if possible, on the man's head in place of the hand, without the change being detected. As an excuse for removing his right hand, the operator pretended to want to readjust the hands that were against the man's breast; then, instead of returning the right to the head the cheek was laid thereon. It was easy for the performer to move the guitar a little distance and twang the strings with one hand; also to play the concertina by holding one end under his arm. He pulled the man's ear, and with two fingers felt about his neck. All this time he breathed very carefully, and kept his head still, in order that the trick might not be detected. At length, stepping away from the man, the performer called for a light, which was produced. Then, for

the first time, the operator saw what the excitement under which he was laboring probably prevented him noticing before, viz: that the gentleman with whom he had been operating was bald-headed!

Then, too, it occurred to him that he had not been shaved for nearly a week, and that his beard must have pricked the bald head, against which his cheek had been pressed. Nevertheless he determined to "cheek it out;" so with a bold face he called on the gentleman for a report. As the latter arose to comply his manner indicated that he was somewhat excited. "I will catch it now," thought the performer; "he will expose my trick, and then, when my public lectures are given, he will say that instead of being able to show how 'mediums' operate, I am but a bungling trickster whom he detected." All this passed through the performer's mind while the gentleman was making ready to speak.

"Friends," said the latter, "while this medium had one hand on my head, with his other hold of mine, as you saw, the instruments were not only played upon as you heard, but the hand of a spirit child tugged at my ear and patted me on the neck; and, what was a little singular, during this time I could feel strong electrical currents passing from the medium's hand into my scalp!"

That man was born to be humbugged.



## CHAPTER VII.

## HOW A MEDIUM FLOATED IN THE AIR.

AN American medium, whose name it is not necessary to give, several times succeeded in making the credulous believe that he floated about, near the ceiling in a darkened room. After going through with several performances in his assumed capacity, he took, from a concealed place, a pair of boots, well stuffed from the toes to the tops with rags, the legs being sewed together from the straps to the end of a stick about six feet long. With slippers on, he mounted a bench-seat that extended along the wall from one end of the room to the other, held the boots out as far as he could easily reach, and with the little end of a horn—through which spirits were supposed to speak—in his mouth, the other end resting over one arm, he requested some person of the company present—all of whom were seated in the opposite part of the room—to come in the direction of the voice, and feel the medium's feet as he was being floated or carried by spirits in the air near the ceiling. It is to be understood that the voice of the medium through the horn purported to be that of a spirit. This voice admonished the one who was to feel the feet to be gentle, and barely touch them, as grasping those members violently might "break conditions," and result in breaking the medium's neck; therefore the person carefully groped his way in the dark, directed by the voice, reaching up with his hands and moving them about till they came in

contact with the boots, to which he adhered with a gentle hold, while the medium led him from one end of the room to the other; then with a solemn sigh he sought his seat, verily believing that he had been in contact with the medium's lower extremities, while that individual was upheld and wafted in the air by a mysterious power. The medium made haste to conceal the boots, and when the light was produced he was apparently in an exhausted condition, which he said was the result of an excessive spiritual draft on his vitality. This "leviation," as it has been called, when practiced by Mr. House, was indulged in by the American medium only when the audience present was composed mostly, if not entirely, of spiritualists. Perhaps if the real facts in his case had been discovered seasonably by his dupes, he would have been deservedly "leviated" by the application of a boot to the most convenient part of his person.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### AN INGENIOUS CONTRIVANCE FOR "MEDIUMISTIC" PURPOSES.

A MEDIUM who aimed at excellence in his profession, and who wished his work to be above suspicion, turned his attention to the mechanical arts as a means of making more converts and more money, and of mounting to the heights of his ambition. He had naturally an ingenious turn of mind; and with his own hands and the necessary tools, he constructed a stand with a secret space

or top. The chamber was air-tight, with the exception of one little hole not much larger than a perforation made with a cambric needle. He balanced a strip of cardboard on the points of two pins fixed on a lead base, so that one end of the strip would be directly over the small hole. Then by pressing with his knee against the lower side of what seemed to the investigator to be the solid top-board of the stand, the air in the concealed chamber would be forced through the hole and cause one end of the strip of cardboard to dip just a little, or till it came in contact with the stand, according to the degree of aerial force. Thus the operator, by as many slight pressures with his knees could make the cardboard dip any number of times. By this means he answered questions and spelled out communications for investigators.

To form the air-chamber, a pine board an inch thick, of the right size for the stand, was dug out so as to make a cavity one quarter of an inch deep, and coming to within an inch and a half of the sides and ends of the board. Another pine board an eighth of an inch thick was closely fitted into the cavity so as to be level with the sides, thus leaving a chamber inside an eighth of an inch deep. The lines of this joinery were directly over the frame or bed of the stand when the construction of the latter was completed, so that the existence of such a secret chamber could not be inferred from anything that would appear to the closest observer. He fitted the stand with a drawer, with which, however, he dispenses while

performing, lest people might imagine, as he said, that it concealed a magnet or something by means of which he could influence the cardboard. He had contrived and executed his plan so well, that he could lean back in his chair, and by bringing the necessary pressure to bear on the stand with his knee, cause a dipping or tilting of the strip of cardboard very much to the astonishment if not satisfaction of the investigator opposite him. He seldom admitted more than one at a time to his room; and had it been suggested that another stand be used he was prepared with the reply that that particular structure was so fully charged with electricity and magnetism by spirits that they could succeed with it better than any other.

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## CHAPTER IV.

“SPIRIT” PHOTOGRAPHS—AN ABSURD AND EXTRAVAGANT IMPOSITION—THE SECRET OF MAKING LIKENESSES OF GHOSTS.

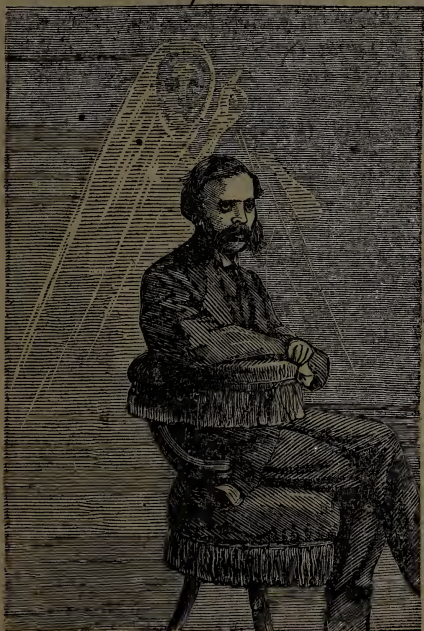
**A**MONG the most astounding impositions upon public credulity was a pretense, made some time since by a man named Mumler, of the ability to photograph the “spirits” of deceased persons. Many people, especially among spiritualists, appear to have believed Mumler’s representations, and accepted the pictures he produced as veritable images of departed friends. These pictures usually represent the “spirit” dimly on the same photograph with the living sitter. Ten dollars a dozen was, we believe, the customary charge for these



pictures, being about five times the common charge for ordinary pictures of like size. It is said Mumler had all the business he could attend to. The spirits appeared dimly in the background of the picture, while the living sitter occupied the foreground. The ghost never appeared in *front* of the sitter, and this fact affords a clue to the mystery. Several theories have been propounded, one being that a person dressed to represent the ghost appeared behind the sitter and was photographed with him. This is an absurdity; the real method is to take a negative (glass from which the card is printed) of the spirit and to wash it out so thoroughly that it appears like clear, simple glass to the eyes. On this the sitter is photographed as though the glass had never been used. The new picture and the old one are then developed together in the ordinary way. The spirit picture now comes out very faint, on account of the previous washing, but the new sitter produces an ordinary photographic likeness. As the second picture covers up much of the spirit one this accounts for it being impossible for the spirit to be in *front* of the sitter.

Mumler had a supply of the prepared glasses, representing ghosts of various ages. It was pretty easy to ascertain from visitors the age and sex of friends recently deceased, and the dim pictures presenting scarcely discernible features could be conjured by a vivid imagination into a likeness of the lost friend. Mumler never risked attempting to take these pictures at any gallery but his own.

Years ago a man was in the employ of Bigelow & Kennard, a great jewelry firm in Boston, in the capacity of engraver. He was an ingenious fellow,



and bought among other things a photographic apparatus and went to taking pictures for amusement. Mr. Kennard tells the story, that one day

he took a picture on a plate that had been previously used and rubbed out, and when he developed it the original picture came out more faint and shadowy. As a joke he showed it to a spiritualistic friend, and told him it was the work of a spirit. The latter readily believed it, called some of his friends in, all wondered at it, and some sat for their pictures and were perfectly taken and taken in. So the business started up, and the artist was doing well.

One afternoon the Hon. Colorado Jewett called at the artist's studio, and said he wanted the spirits of the great men of the past to come to his aid and inspire him to do great things. He wanted his picture taken, with the spirits of these men in the background, and asked the artist to put him through in that line. The artist told him he could not do it then, but if he would come again he would accommodate him, or at all events would make the effort.

In the evening the artist went out and procured the portraits of Webster, Clay, Calhoun, Benton, and Napoleon, and the next morning before Jewett arrived he had the plates properly prepared. Jewett sat for five pictures in succession, and one after another the great men gathered around him. Jewett was delighted, but he wanted Washington, and begged the artist to bring the father of his country to him. The artist could not do it, as he had no Washington in the house, and finally Jewett knelt upon the floor and prayed to have Washington come to his aid. But Washington didn't come;

the artist thought it would be carrying the joke too far, and so the great American diplomat departed without him.

This man used the process only as a joke, but Mumler, in the employ of the same firm, saw in it an opportunity for imposition and commenced the spiritual photography. An expert amateur photographer gives the following additional methods by which these photographs may be taken. Mumler appears to have used several different ways, as some of his pictures indicate the use of one process and others another.

1. A glass with an image on it of the desired spirit form could be placed in the plate-holder, in front of the sensitive plate, so that the image on the glass would be impressed on the sensitive plate, together with that of the sitter. The size and distinctness of the resulting spirit form would vary according to the distance between the two plates.

2. A figure, clothed in white, can be introduced for a moment behind the sitter, and then be withdrawn before the sitting is over, leaving a shadowy image on the plate. This is known as "Sir David Brewster's ghost."

3. A microscopic picture of the spirit form can be inserted in the camera box alongside of the lens, and by a small magnifying lens its image can be thrown on the sensitive plate with that of the sitter.

4. A glass with the spirit image can be placed behind the sensitive plate after the sitting is com-

pleted, and by a feeble light, the image can be impressed on the plate with that of the sitter. [This was the process exhibited to our reporter by Mr. Rockwell, photographer, at 839 Broadway.]

5. The nitrate of silver bath could have a glass side and the image be impressed by a secret light, while apparently the glass plate was only being coated with the sensitive film.

6. The spirit form can be printed first on the negative, and then the figure of the living sitter added by a second printing, or it can be printed on the paper and the sitter's portrait printed over it.

7. A sensitive plate can be prepared by what is known as the dry process, the spirit form impressed on it, and then, at a subsequent time, the portrait of the living sitter can be taken on this same plate, so that the two will be developed together.

Our illustration shows one of the spirit photographs. The spirit is cut off by having the lower part of the sensitive plate covered with paper while in the camera taking the person representing the spirit.

Mumler's exposure was brought about by two young countrymen, acquaintances, who had visited the place unknown to each other, but met on the stairs after obtaining their pictures. On comparing their photographs they discovered that each had desired his grandmother's picture, and both grandmothers were represented by duplicates of the same picture.



## CHAPTER X.

## SPIRITUALISTIC DOCTORING—QUACKERY AND IGNORANCE.

IF there is any merit in spiritualism, it does not appear to extend to those purporting to treat disease by its aid. These doctors are, so far as our experience goes, ignorant pretenders, without skill, and only intent on gaining money from the credulous. The following bit of experience we find in one of the New York papers :

Catherine L. Moody, a spiritualistic doctress, on Wednesday last procured a summons for the husband of one of her patients, named John Ashford. Justice Arnold issued the writ, and when the parties appeared in court, the following strange system of medical practice was found to have been pursued. It seems that Mrs. Ashford, who has recently recovered from a severe illness, had procured Mrs. Moody to attend her. The latter lady, who "healed by the laying on of her hands," pronounces the case one of lung fever, and said the spirits had revealed to her that in case she (Mrs. M.) should eat three meals a day (out of Mrs. A.'s larder, of course), the ailing woman would regain her health. In following the alleged advice of the spirits, the doctress seems to have been very faithful, but after attending to the sick woman for two weeks no improvement was noticeable, and Dr. Avery was called in, who pronounced the case one of bilious fever. The lady shortly recovered. On the trial, however, Mrs. Moody laid her claim for



two weeks' nursing, but it was proven that one-half of that time she spent in the capacity of a physician, and the court allowed her \$7 for her services as nurse, and the female Esculapius departed much displeased at the small estimation of the value of her services.

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## CHAPTER XI.

SPIRIT FACES—THE DOCTOR AND HIS DOOR-KEEPER.

A RECENT case before one of the New York courts has "let the cat out of the bag" regarding one species of the "spirit" humbug. The charge was one of theft preferred against Thomas Sproul, by Mrs. Elizabeth Fuller, who accused him of stealing from her a gold watch and chain worth \$150. At the present writing no decision has been made in the case, but the investigation has exposed a "spiritual" trick which doubtless imposed upon many victims. Sproul first became acquainted with Dr. Gordon about October, 1871. The doctor told Mr. Sproul that the spirits had sent him to be his brother, and desired him to call again soon. In about two weeks he complied with the spirits' (?) request and made another visit, when he again went through a series of mysterious performances, saying the angels requested that he and Mr. Sproul should become brothers. On Mr. Sproul's next visit, he passed the night with the "doctor," and from that time remained with him. The "doctor," at that time was giving seances around the table with very poor success. He



fairly astonished his friends one night by leaving the circle and producing what purported to be the face of a spirit, which had the effect of putting one lady into a state of syncope. From that time forth spirit faces were no uncommon visitors at the table of the "doctor."

Mr. Sproul believed that all these manifestations were genuine, and took the position of business manager or "chief doorkeeper;" his only duty being to make arrangements with visitors for seances.

The little "doctor's" duplicity in pretending to show the strangers the whole of his premises, and, at the same time, concealing certain portions of them, excited the suspicions of his "chief doorkeeper," who instituted a search, and discovered various profile faces drawn on card-board, which he quickly recognized as those of the pretended spirits, upon which he immediately asked the infinitesimal fraud if it were not possible for him to be honest with his assistant at least. The "doctor" waxed indignant and told Mr. Sproul that if any one was a bold deceiver he was the wretch. Sproul said nothing but watched his chance until finding the profiles he burned them up, and for a time put an end to any ocular proofs of the so-called spiritual visitations.

The doctor's dodge was this: He had in his room an altar, and his favorite masquerading costume consisted of two pulpit gowns; with one of these over the other he was furnished with a capital means of concealing his pictures, which pro-



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duced at intervals under sights and circumstances calculated to deceive the spectator. But the cat was out of the bag, and the assistant squealed. The doctor's game was up, and his seance steek low down.

The spirit pictures, of which there were some twenty-five, were common colored lithographs; one of them a familiar print of a young lady, entitled the Queen of Beauty, trimmed around the head with scissors and stiffened on the back by having two strips of cardboard pasted crosswise on it. This when dressed up was supposed to be the "spirit bride" of Gordon—a young lady to whom he had been engaged years before, but who had died. Gordon would pin a long robe of illusion lace to the cardboard and place flowers over the hair, and then exhibit it in the dark as a spirit. The pictures were held in Gordon's left hand, and raised and lowered by raising and lowering his arm.

Another manifestation was performed as follows: Two pieces of black sewing silk were fastened behind the head of one of these cardboard pictures, and drawn over a wire suspended across the room so that the picture hung down with its face to the audience. The threads were then fastened to the door knobs of the folding doors, which opened outward. Every time Gordon opened the doors the figure would be raised up, and when the doors were shut the figure would lower. This trick was performed to satisfy some skeptical gentlemen. Gordon staid in the inner room on the plea that the trance was very exhausting.